

**Burns, Vanessa**

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**From:** Barbara Schaffer [Barbara.Schaffer@att.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 24, 2011 2:36 PM  
**To:** AppropriationTestimony  
**Subject:** Testimony for Conservation and Development

Dear Appropriations Co-Chairs Harp and Walker:

Elm Shakespeare (ESC) is a small non-profits arts and educational organization residing in New Haven and serving the Greater New Haven and Connecticut community. Established in 1995, ESC's mission is to bring live professional Shakespeare in the Park to the Greater New Haven Community each summer outdoors at Edgerton Park. We are unique in that we offer this theater experience free of charge with the goal of making the arts accessible to everyone without exception and to bringing our community together in this harmonious festive atmosphere thereby enriching our city and our citizens' experience of living in our community and our state. Audience members come from statewide as well as out of state to enjoy our performances.

Funding from The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism has been an integral part of our ability to sustain Free Shakespeare in the Park. ESC relies solely on contributed income to support these performances and the Commission has been a major contributor for the past 16 years to our summer theatre both through the General Operating Support Grant and the Endowment Grant. Over the past three years we have experienced a reduction in GOS funding from a high of \$25,000 to our most recent FY2010-2011 grant of \$8000. This is nearly a 60% reduction over the past three years. This cut has forced Elm Shakespeare to reduce the number of performances we offer from 21 to 16 and to offer only one show per season (for four years we offered two plays in rotating repertory- one Shakespeare and one non-Shakespeare - thus broadening our audience and reach.) 40,000 people have attended our four weeks of performances of two plays in rotating repertory. The shorter season has reduced our audience by 30% to approximately 25,000 attendees.

2/24/2011

Reaching 25,000 people in our community, who might not otherwise have the chance to experience live theater, is still a substantial delivery of program for which to be proud. However, should ESC experience even further cuts from the state, our ability to maintain the quality and the free admission becomes more and more threatened and challenging. We continually strive to identify and cultivate new sources of funding from corporations, foundations and individuals but the economy has reduced all aspects of giving.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to avoid any further cuts to the CCC & T budget! Connecticut has always been a state proud of our commitment to the arts; our realization of the important economic impact the arts have on our state and the enrichment and engagement the arts bring to Connecticut's children and families enhancing the quality of our lives.

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